



Ernie Fletcher
Governor

LaJuana S. Wilcher
Secretary
Environmental and Public
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Environmental Quality Commission

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Environmental Quality Commission

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March 10, 2004

The Honorable Ernie Fletcher
State Capitol
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Governor Fletcher:

The Environmental Quality Commission (EQC), a seven-member citizen board that advises the Governor and other state officials on environmental matters, asks for your support for the Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF) land purchase program for FY 2005.

Funding to purchase unique natural areas in the DBNF is urgently needed to continue to build Kentucky's only national forest into premier tourist destination and to preserve some of the last remaining vestiges of our natural heritage. A \$3.5 million request will allow the DBNF to purchase priority sites, including land along the Rockcastle River and in the Red River Gorge. The Red River Gorge is one of Kentucky's natural treasures. The area is best known for the many natural stone bridges, more than 80 of them (a number exceeded only in Arches National Park in Utah), and the deep gorge of the North Fork of the Red River, formed by almost 80 million years of erosion.

Purchase of these lands from willing sellers will protect these unique areas, improve the quality of streams that supply the Kentucky River, a source of domestic water supplies for many communities along the Kentucky River and continue to support our growing tourism economy. In 2001, some 2.35 million tourists visited the Daniel Boone National Forest and on average spent \$1,292 on outdoor recreation activities generating \$3 billion in revenues. The Daniel Boone National Forest will play an increasing role in diversifying local economies through blending both traditional commercial uses of the forest and growing markets such as tourism to create a healthier economy and environment.

We hope you will join us in supporting a \$3.5 million request for the DBNF FY 2005 land purchase program. The Daniel Boone National Forest requires your support and commitment in order to continue to build it into one of the great national forests of the South.

We hope you will express your support for the DBNF land purchase program to Kentucky's Congressional Delegation. The program can be funded through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Each year, Congress appropriates up to \$900 million for federal LWCF projects.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Chairman, Environmental Quality Commission

Cc: Allyson Handley, Gov. Office
Jim Host, Commerce Cabinet

LaJuana Wilcher, Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet
Kentucky Congressional Delegation
Ben Worthington, Supervisor, DBNF